In, A.F.Q, v.1 # 3(Sept), 1945,

FUR FORT TO CAPITAL

By

W. Everard Edmonds.

Edmonton's early history goes back to 1795, the period when the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were interlocked in a deadly grapple for the trade of the north-western half of the North American continent. Their interests clashed most directly in the valley of the Saskatchewan and along that great river several rival trading posts were built. The two of greatest interest to us today were Fort Augustus, the property of the North-West Company, and Fort Edmonton, the Hudson's Bay Company's post built in 1795. These two posts were founded side by side, partly to watch each other, and partly for mutual protection against the war-like Indians of the plains.. In 1821, when the two companies were united under the name of the older company, the name Fort Edmonton was retained, and that of Fort Augustus was dropped. Nevertheless, these two forts were the parents of the Edmonton we know today, though they were situated some twenty miles away from the site of the present city.

Old Fort Augustus and Fort Edmonton were destroyed by Indians about 1807 or 1808, and a little laterm two new forts were erected farther up the river.on the site of the present city.

The peril to the forts along the Saskatchewan arose partly from the fact that the river tended to be the debatable frontier between the Blackfoot Confederacy of Plains Indians to the south and the Crees who were dwellers in the forests to the north. As Alexander Henry says:in his Journal: "The frequent

disturbances between the Slaves (Blackfeet) and the Crees cause a certain jealousy which they often wish to revenge on us, saying that we are more partial to one tribe than to the other." Thus that very central position, advantageous for trade because the forts were easily accessible to the members of both tribes, was really a source of danger to the traders.

The spring of the following year, however, saw the next phase of Edmonton's early and precarious existence. In 1810 Hughes and Henry decided to abandon Fort Augustus and Fort Vermilion some distance down the river, and to build a new post at a point somewhere between. The post chosen was the mouth of the White Mud River. The reason for the change, as Henry explains, was that White Mud or White Earth "being a more central place, will answer the same purpose as the two present establishments, and will save the expense of one of them. It will also draw all the Slaves (Blackfeet) to trade at one place, where we can better defend ourselves from their insults."

Apparently the Hudson's Bay Company officials shared in this decision, for we find that the migration to the new site and the erection of the new posts was carried on in close conjunction and even co-operation by the employees of the two Companies. Thus the same Blackfoot peril which had led to the abandonment of Old Fort Augustus for New Fort Augustus in 1808, now caused the desertion of the latter for New White Earth House in 1810.

Just how long the site of the present city remained deserted after its abandonment in 1810, it is difficult to say. It is possible that the family of David Thompson, the explorer,

spent the winter of 1810-11 in the fort. In May, 1811, Alexander Henry, on his way down the river from Rocky Mountain House pitched his tent inside the old house. In 1814 John McDonald of Garth, returning from Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia entered Fort Augustus. In 1820, however, Dr. Richardson, the physician accompanying Sir John Franklin's expedition to the Polar Sea, travelled up the Saskatchewan as far as Carlton House, where he records in his journal the fact that "there are other provision posts, Fort Augustus and Edmonton, farther up the river." As Dr. Richardson wrote in 1820, it is probable that the posts were re-occupied in 1819 or even earlier.

Richardson did actually visit Fort Augustus, and we are indebted to Alexander Ross, one of the pioneer fur traders of the Pacific slope for a picture of life in Edmonton over a hundred years ago. Ross, who had decided to retire from trade, met Governor Simpson at Spokane House in 1825, and accompanied him back to Rupert's Land. The party had ascended the Columbia to Portage Point. Thence they had toiled across the Athabasca Pass to Rocky Mountain House, and then descending the Athabasca, past Jasper House to Fort Assinaboine, they had there taken horse for Edmonton.

For four years now the strife of Nor'Wester and Hudson's Bay in the land had been hushed. Rival posts had been amalgamated and there was now but one fort at Edmonton, the name of the Hudson's Bay station having been retained. But it was a striking mark of the union which had taken place that while the Hudson's Bay name remained, the official in charge was Chief Factor Rowand, who had been a partner in the North West Company. "Fort Edmonton," says Ross, "is a large, compact establishment, with good buildings,

palisades and bastions, pleasantly situated in a deep valley. An extensive and profitable trade is carried on with warlike tribes of the plains." The fort here referred to was doubtless the old building halfway up the river bank, with which old timers are familiar, and not any mere restoration of the still older forts on the flats which had been abandoned in 1810. Of the man who ruled over this well set up and prosperous post Ross gives a pleasing picture. "Mr. Chief Factor Rowand, who has been long here is the chief man of what is called the Fort Saskatchewan district. By him we were received with open arms. Gentlemen in the service are in the habit of receiving all strangers, whether of high or low rank, with courtesy and affability."

That evening in honour of the presence of the governor a grand ball was held which the entire population attended, arrayed in their best attire. For the affair as a whole, and for the ladies in particular, Ross has nothing bur praise. "I had often heard the females of Fort des Prairies were celebrated for their attraction," he says, "and I must say that report had not in the least degree exaggerated their accomplishments. Modest and unassuming, they dressed well, danced well, and made a good show of fineries. In short, the whole affair was conducted with much good taste and decorum." As the annual boat brigade for York Factory, with which the party was now to travel, was not yet ready to depart, Ross had leisure to look about the fort, of which he leaves an interesting picture.

Even at this early day, thanks to the gift for discipline of Mr. Rowand, Edmonton's population had assumed a moral, orderly, industrious character. "I had seen very few places in the country,"

says Ross, "where domestic arrangements, either within doors or without, were conducted with so much propriety as at this place. At almost every other post men and women are to be seen congregating together during the sports and amusements of the men. But it is not so here. I did not see a woman, old or young, married or single going about the place idle; all seemed to keep at home and to be employed about their own affairs. This reflects great credit upon Mr. Rowand and his family."

Ross notes also the agricultural activities of the fort. "Attached to this place," he says, "are two large parks for raising grain, and the soil being good, it produces large crops of barley and potatoes; but the spring and fall frosts prove injurious to wheat, which in consequence seldom comes to maturity."

Adjoining the cultivated fields was a race course some two miles in length. Here horse-racing, one of the chief summer sports of the establishment, was indulged in. Ross himself enjoyed a good gallop around the course on a steed of Mr. Rowand's, a chesnut sixteen hands high and very spirited. Many of the horses, he declared, for both size and muscle, were as fine animals as he had ever seen in the country.

It will be noted that the Alberta capital has borne a number of names. The North Westers called it Fort Augustus, and Ross refers to it as Fort de Prairie or Fort des Prairies. The name Edmonton, taken from that famous suburb in London connected with John Gilpin's ride, is, however, the one applied to it by the Hudson's Bay Company, and the one that has remained.

Alexandeer Henry has made very clear to us that trading with the Indians at the fort had an element of danger in it, and

so much was this appreciated by the Hudson's Bay Company that a loaded blunderbuss was fixed on the trader's counter, in front of which the Indian fur seller was strategically placed for summary execution if he showed signs of creating trouble. "I visited the old store," says Hon. Frank Oliver,"on my arrival in Edmonton, and although it had not been used for ten years, one could easily see how business was conducted. All approaches to the store were directly in the line of fire so that the Indian had a pretty fair idea that he had better come to the purchasing counter peacably inclined. Any other attitude on his part would have been indiscreet, to say the least."

The old fort below the present parliament buildings had an eighteen foot palisade around its four walls. This was supplemented by a gallery, rimmed with port holes. At each corner was a blockhouse of two storeys, the upper one projecting sufficiently to prevent its being scaled by a hostile foe. In the front wall of this fort and facing the river was the big gate just wide enough for a team to drive through; a short distance from this was the only other gate, a small wicket, through which a man had to stoop in order to pass. In the store itself, the larger space was for the clerk, the smaller one for the customer.

Although Edmonton was abandoned for a time as a chief distributing centre by the Hudson's Bay Company, in favour of Fort Carlton, then a centre of the buffalo trade, it came back to its own in the days of river navigation in the early eighties. It was clearly proved then, as it has since been proved more than once, that Edmonton was the logical route to the great unknown north with all its boundless resources.

Following the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company's rights to the Canadian Government, the Edmonton settlement was established about 1870. Through the efforts of the Rev. George McDougall, the devoted missionary, the Methodist Church secured a large block of land (on a portion of which McDougall Church now stands) and the first Methodist church was built there in 1871.

Eventually a number of lots were sold, the first two for business purposes being bought by Hon. Frank Oliver and John A. McDougall, both of whom arrived in Edmonton in 1876. The first hotel was opened by Donald Ross and the first newspaper, "The Edmonton Bulletin" was published by Hon. Frank Oliver and the late Alex. Taylor. Gradually the population increased, chiefly because it was believed that the C. P. R. must pass through the settlement. Many Edmonton lots were sold in Winnipeg during the boom of 1882.

When the Rev. D. G. McQueen arrived in Edmonton in 1887, the population numbered about one hundred and fifty, and a stage ran between Calgary and Edmonton only once a week. Dr. McQueen was inspector of schools in the district for several years, and he tells us that the first schoolhouse in Edmonton was built in 1881, Richard Secord being one of the pioneer teachers. The Klondyke gold rush in 1898 helped to swell Edmonton's population, and the future of the city was assured when the Canadian Northern Railway entered the town in 1905. Though the Calgary and Edmonton line had been in operation for some years previously, it was not until the high level bridge was built in 1912 that the long looked for C. P. R. arrived on the north side of the Saskatchewan.

Edmonton was incorporated as a town in 1892, Matthew McCauley being the first mayor. The Klondyke gold rush of 1898 helped to swell the population of the settlement to 2,500, and in 1904 the name of Edmonton first made its appearance on the roll of western cities by legislative act. Edmonton became the capital of the newly formed province of Alberta in 1906.

Thus has the old order given place to the new. From a remote fur trading post, Edmonton has developed into a modern up-to-date city with a population of 112,000 souls.

What wonderful changes the last few years have witnessed. The old fort is gone and the rude hamlet is no more. The north bank of the Saskatchewan is today crowned with the beautiful parliament buildings while, on the south side of the river, the growing group of stately buildings on the university campus serves as a constant reminder that "the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." And here, may I say in closing, we have the secret of Edmonton's greatness. Not in granite magnificence, not in moneyed splendour - but in the utilization of the vast potentialities with which Nature has so bountifully endowed her, and in the unfailing courage and integrity of her citizens shall the City of Edmonton find her soul.

Fur Fort to Capital

By W. Everard Edmonds

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDMONTON

Edmonton's Beginnings

EDMONTON'S early history goes back to 1795 the period when the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were interlocked in a deadly grapple for the trade of the north western half of the North American continent. Their interests clashed most directly in the valley of the Saskatchewan and along that great river several rival trading posts were built. The two of greatest interest to us today were Fort Augustus, the property of the North West Company, and Fort Edmonton, the Hudson's Bay Company's post. These two posts were founded side by side, partly to watch each other, and partly for mutual protection against the warlike Indians of the plains. In 1821, when the two companies were united under the name of the older company, the name Fort Edmonton was retained, and that of Fort Augustus was dropped. Nevertheless, these two forts were the parents of the Edmonton we know today, though they were situated some twenty miles away from the site of the present city.

Old Fort Augustus and Fort Edmonton were destroyed by Indians about 1807 or 1808, and a little later, two new forts were erected farther up the river. Tyrell tells us that New Fort Augustus was built by James Hughes of the North West Company, and Edmonton by a trader named Rowand of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1808 at the foot of the high bank within the present city of Edmonton. Alexander Henry visited the New Fort Augustus in 1809, and the noted explorer's journal gives us a vivid picture of Edmonton in its infancy.

"We met a long string of Indians under march, mostly intoxicated; they called out to us for rum, but we went on till we come to the entrance of the strong woods, where

built in 1795

on the site of the present city.

the track brought us upon the bank in sight of the river, at a flat bottom on which were the two establishments."

Edmonton on its present site was exactly one year old at the time of Henry's visit, and from his account we gather that horse thieving was a most popular Indian pastime, for on Oct. 31st he writes:

"This morning early, Drinking Bull, chief of the Bloods appeared on the south side, and called out to be crossed over, (to be ferried across in a boat kept by the company for that purpose.) This was done. It was something uncommon for a great chief thus to come ahead without sending young men in for tobacco, but the cause was this: During the summer the tribe had formed a war party against the Crees, and crossed the river below this place, but failing in their undertakng, they deaired to wreak their vegeance upon this establishment. Fortunately their tracks were discovered, and our people kept watch during the night. The fellows came near the fort, but seeing our people on their guard, they dared not attack us, and contented themselves with taking all the horses they could find — only twelve.

"To-day was the first time since that affair that any of them had appeared here, and they were doubtful of their reception. The chief therefore came over alone and informed Mr. Hughes that he had brought back eight of the twelve horses; the other four, he said, were too lame to walk. But the truth was that these four were good buffalo hunters and the others cart horses. He got a severe reprimand, and soon after the whole band arrived consisting of about one hundred men. Rum was given them and they went to drink on the south side."

The turbulence of the Indians displayed itself next day, "The Bloods crossed," says Henry, "and began to trade, forty, principal men at our fort, and sixty at the Hudson's

Bay. A band of Sarcees also crossed. Both parties finished trading and recrossed to the south side. They were much inclined to mischief, but observing everything prepared to give them a proper reception, they retired peaceably though our neighbors were pillaged and nearly stripped by them on the south side."

The peril to the forts along the Saskatchewan arose partly from the fact that the river tended to be the debatable frontier between the Blackfoot Confederacy of Plains Indians to the south and the Crees who were dwellers in the forests to the north. As Henry says: "The frequent disturbances between the Slaves (Blackfeet) and the Crees cause a certain jealousy which they often wish to revenge on us, saying that we are more partial to one tribe than to the other." Thus that very central position, advantageous for trade because the forts were easily accessible to the members of both tribes, was really a source of danger to the traders.

The spring of the following year, however, saw the next phase of Edmonton's early and precarious existence. In 1810 Hughes and Henry decided to abandon Fort Augustus and Fort Vermilion some distance down the river, and to build a new post at a point somewhere between. The post chosen was the mouth of the White Mud river. The reason for the change, as Henry explains, was that White Mud or White Earth "being a more central place, will answer the same purpose as the two present establishments, and will save the expense of one of them. It will also draw all the Slaves (Blackfeet) to trade at one place, where we can better defend ourselves from their insults."

Apparently the Hudson's Bay Company officials shared in this decision, for we find that the migration to the new site and the erection of the new posts was carried on in close conjunction and even co-operation by the employees

of the two Companies. Thus the same Blackfoot peril which had led to the abandonment of Old Fort Augustus for New Fort Augustus in 1808, now caused the desertion of the latter for New White Earth House in 1810.

Just how long the site of the present city remained deserted after its abandonment in 1810, it is difficult to say. It is possible that the family of David Thompson, the explorer, spent the winter of 1810-11 in the fort. In May, 1811, Alexander Henry, on his way down the river from Rocky Mountain House pitched his tent inside the old house. In 1814 John McDonald of Garth, returning from Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia entered Fort Augustus, but he makes no mention of its being inhabited. In 1820, however, Dr. Richardson, the physician accompanying Sir John Franklin's expedition to the Polar Sea, travelled up the Saskatchewan as far as Carlton House, where he records in his journal the fact that "there are other provision posts, Fort Augustus and Edmonton, farther up the river." As Dr. Richardson wrote in 1820, it is probable that the posts were re-occupied in 1819 or even earlier. Forts Rebuilt here

Richardson did not actually visit Fort Augustus, and we are indebted to Alexander Ross, one of the pioneer fur traders of the Pacific slope for a picture of life in Edmonton nearly a hundred years ago. Ross, who had decided to retire from trade, met Governor Simpson at Spokane House in 1825, and accompanied him back to Rupert's Land. The party had ascended the Columbia to Portage Point. Thence they had toiled across the Athabasca Pass to Rocky Mountain House, and then descending the Athabasca past Jasper House to Fort Assiniboine, they had there taken horse for Edmonton.

For four years now the strife of Nor' Wester and Hudson's Bay in the land been hushed. Rival posts had been amalgamated and there was now but one fort at Edmonton,

the name of the Hudson's Bay station having been retained. But it was a striking mark of the union which had taken place that while the Hudson's Bay name remained, the official in charge was Chief Factor Rowan, who had been a partner in the North West Company. "Fort Edmonton" says Ross, "is a large, compact establishment, with good buildings, palisades and bastions, pleasantly situated in a deep valley. An extensive and profitable trade is carried on with the warlike tribes of the plains." The fort here referred to was doubtless the old building halfway up the river bank, with which all are familiar, and not any mere restoration of the still older forts on the flats which had been abandoned in 1810. Of the man who ruled over this well set up and prosperous post Ross gives a pleasing picture. "Mr. Chief Factor Rowan, who has been long here is the chief man of what is called the Fort Saskatchewan district. By him we were received with open arms. Gentlemen in the service are in the habit of receiving all strangers, whether of high or low rank, with courtesy and affability. From motives of interest, also, all Indians visiting the establishments are welcomed with kindness and treated as children by the traders. Thus all these roving savages look up to Mr. Rowan as their common father and he has for more than a quarter of a century taught them to love and fear him."

That evening in honor of the prsence of the governor, a grand ball was held which the entire population attended, arrayed in their best attire. For the affair as a whole, and for the ladies in particular, Ross has nothing but praise. "I had often heard the females of Fort des Prairies were celebrated for their attractions," he says, "and I must say that report had not in the least degree exaggerated their accomplishments. Modest and unassuming, they dressed well, danced well, and made a good show of fineries. In

short, the whole affair was conducted with much good taste and decorum." As the annual boat brigade for York Factory, with which the party was now to travel, was not yet ready to depart, Ross had leisure to look about the fort, of which he leaves an interesting picture.

Even at this early day, thanks to the gift for discipline of Mr. Rowan, Edmonton's population had assumed a moral, orderly, industrious character. "I had seen very few places in the country," says Ross, "where domestic arrangements, either within doors or without, were conducted with so much propriety as at this place. At almost every other post men and women are to be seen congregating together during the sports and amusements of the men. But it is not so here. I did not see a woman, old or young, married or single going about the place idle; all seemed to keep at home and to be employed about their own affairs. This reflects great credit upon Mr. Rowan and his family."

Ross notes also the agricultural activities of the fort. "Attached to this place," he says, "are two large parks for raising grain, and the soil being good, it produces large crops of barley and potatoes; but the spring and fall frosts prove injurious to wheat, which in consequence seldom comes to maturity."

Adjoining the cultivated fields was a race course some two miles in length. Here horse-racing, one of the chief summer sports of the establishments, was indulged in. Ross himself enjoyed a good gallop around the course on a steed of Mr. Rowan's, a chestnut sixteen hands high and very spirited. Many of the horses, he declared, for both size and muscle, were as fine animals as he had ever seen in the country.

After a delay of a fortnight for the travellers, the boat brigade for York Factory was now ready to start. It con-

sisted on this occasion of twelve barges, roomy and comfortable, and propelled by oars. Each boat was capable of carrying a cargo of one hundred packets of 100 pounds weight each. The down cargo consisted in every case of the annual catch of furs, and the up cargo of supplies for the succeeding season's trade. The round-trip consumed on an average four and one-half months.

The annual departure of the boat brigade for York Factory must have been one of the chief events in the life of the little community of early Edmonton. The women folk, no doubt, would gather to bid the voyagers farewell. There would be much barking of dogs and running about of children. Perhaps on this occasion, too, in honor of the governor and to impress the natives duly with his importance, a salute would be fired from the diminutive cannon of the fort. At last all are aboard, and the boats begin to drift downward with the rapid current of the Saskatchewan.

It will be noted that the Alberta capital has borne a number of names. The North Westers called it Fort Augustus, and Ross refers to it as Fort de Prairie or Fort des Prairies. The name Edmonton, taken from that famous suburb in London connected with John Gilpin's ride, is however, the one applied to it by the Hudson's Bay Company and the one that has remained.

Alexander Henry has made very clear to us that trading with the Indians at the fort had an element of danger in it, and so much was this appreciated by the Hudson's Bay Company that a loaded blunderbus was fixed on the trader's counter, in front of which the Indian fur seller was strategically placed for summary execution if he showed signs of creating trouble. "I visited the old store" says Hon. Frank Oliver, "on my arrival in Edmonton, and although it had not been used for ten years, one could easily see

how business was conducted. All approaches to the store were directly in the line of fire so that the Indian had a pretty fair idea that he had better come to the purchasing counter peacably inclined. Any other attitude on his part would have been indiscreet, to say the least."

The old fort below the present parliament buildings had an eighteen foot palisade around its four walls. This was supplemented by a gallery, rimmed with port holes. At each corner was a blockhouse of two storeys, the upper one projecting sufficiently to prevent its being scaled by a hostile foe. In the front wall of this fort and facing the river was the big gate just wide enough for a team to drive through; a short distance from this was the only other gate, a small wicket, through which a man had to stoop in order to pass. In the store itself, the larger space was for the clerk, the smaller one for the customer.

Although Edmonton was abandoned for a time as a chief distributing centre by the Hudson's Bay Company, in favor of Fort Carlton, then a centre of the buffalo trade, it came back to its own in the days of river navigation in in the early eighties. It was clearly proved then, as it has since been proved more than once, that Edmonton was the logical route to the great unknown north with all its boundless resources.

Following the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company's rights to the Canadian Government, the Edmonton settlement was established about 1870. Through the efforts of the Rev. George McDougall, the devoted missionary, the Methodist Church secured a large block of land, (on a portion of which McDougall Church now stands) and the first Methodist church was built there in 1871.

Eventually a number of lots were sold, the first two for business purposes being bought by Hon. Frank Oliver and John A. McDougall, both of whom arrived in Edmonton

in 1876. The first hotel was opened by Donald Ross and the first newspaper, "The Edmonton Bulletin," was published by Hon. Frank Oliver and the late Alex. Taylor. Gradually the population increased, chiefly because it was believed that the C. P. R. must pass through the settlement. Many Edmonton lots were sold in Winnipeg during the boom of 1882.

When the Rev. D. G. McQueen arrived in Edmonton in 1887, the population numbered about one hundred and fifty, and a stage ran between Calgary and Edmonton only once a week. Dr. McQueen was inspector of schools in the district for several years, and he tells us that the first schoolhouse in Edmonton was built in 1881, Richard Secord being one of the pioneer teachers. The Klondyke gold rush in 1898 helped to swell Edmonton's population, and the future of the city was assured when the Canadian Northern Railway entered the town in 1905. Though the Calgary and Edmonton line had been in operation for some years previously, it was not until the high level bridge was built in 1912, that the long looked for C. P. R. arrived on the north side of the Saskatchewan. The [illegible] showed its foresight by making this city one of its chief divisional points, and erecting here one of its palatial hotels.

Edmonton was incorporated as a town in 1892, Matthew McCauley being the first mayor. The Klondyke gold rush of 1898 helped to swell the population of the settlement to 2,500, and in 1904 the name of Edmonton first made its appearance on the roll of western cities. [illegible] Edmonton became the capital of the newly formed province of Alberta. in 1906.

By legislative act,

Thus has the old order given place to the new. From a remote fur-trading post, Edmonton has developed into a modern up-to-date city with a population of 65,000 souls. Today it is the home [illegible] railway [illegible]

~112,000

what wonderful changes the last few years have wrought. The old fort is gone and the rude hamlet is no more. The north bank of the Saskatchewan is today crowned with the beautiful parliament buildings, the residence of the lieutenant-governor, and the noble Chateau Macdonald, while on the south side of the river, the growing group of stately buildings on the university campus serves as a constant reminder that "the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." And here, may I say in closing, we have the secret of Edmonton's greatness. Not in granite magnificence, not in moneyed splendor—but in the utilization of the quieter but vast potentialities with which Nature has no bountifully endowed her, shall the City of Edmonton find her soul. monitor find her soul) and in the unfailing courage and integrity of her citizens, shall the

(approximately 2000 words)